



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Chiltern Hills Academy

Chartridge Lane
Chesham
Bucks
HP5 2RG

Previous SIAMS grade: N/A

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 6 and 7 May 2015

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 137280

Headteacher: Kevin Patrick

Inspector's name and number: Jo Fageant 104

School context

Chiltern Hills became a Church of England academy in 2011 and is smaller than average in size. It is jointly sponsored by the Diocese of Oxford and Buckinghamshire County Council having been transformed from an existing community school. Old buildings have been refurbished and new ones added. It serves a socially, culturally and religiously diverse community. A higher than average number of pupils speak English as an additional language being mainly of British born Pakistani heritage. There is a Church funded chaplaincy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chiltern Hills Academy (CHA) as a Church of England school are good

- The academy's Christian inspired commitment to ensuring all students achieve as well as they can drives a rigorous system of tracking their progress and the development of appropriate strategies to support learning
- The academy's Christian values have supported the establishment and continuing development of a strong sense of inclusive, caring community where all, staff and students alike, are welcomed, valued and supported
- The commitment of the local church enables the academy to have chaplaincy support and an explicit Christian presence working with staff and students.

Areas to improve

- As part of the current review of the academy's mission, ensure that a distinctively Christian perspective on the seven key values (the *Chiltern Hills 7*) helps define and explain the commitment to high quality, inclusive education for all so this is widely understood within the school and local communities
- Develop opportunities for students to take more frequent and greater responsibility for the planning and leadership of worship at least in class and year group contexts to enhance their understanding of and active participation in what all recognise as worship

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

The day to day life of the academy is underpinned by seven key values known as the *Chiltern Hills 7*. They are understood by everyone to be Christian values while students from other faiths and with no religious affiliation recognise their relevance and importance. Students who have been in the school during its time of transformation are clear that they have made a significant and positive difference to behaviour, relationships and learning, all of which, in turn, are bringing about improving academic results. Students acknowledge the support they receive for their learning and are particularly appreciative of revision sessions for external examinations provided out of school time which are well targeted to their specific needs. Despite these efforts there are still some students who do not do as well as monitoring suggests they should. The Christian commitment to the achievement of all students has led to the development of personalised routes through Key Stage 4 enabling students to follow courses suited to their abilities and interests. This commitment also focuses on the well-being of staff and students. Students who join the academy other than at the start of Year 7 and new staff speak of the welcome they experience and how this is a clear exemplification of the academy's values. The *learning hub* provides care, nurture and support for students who have temporary and permanent challenges which create barriers to learning. This facility, along with consistent reference to the academy's values, is helping to improve attendance and reduce exclusions. The Christian significance of these values is explored through the *thought for the week* programme. This together with the religious education (RE) course, in which students explore Christian diversity and other religions, makes a rich contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The commitment of other subjects to these aspects of development varies. The good use RE makes of the diversity within the academy to enrich students' understanding of one another's religious and non-religious beliefs supports the respect and sense of inclusiveness which permeate this Church of England academy.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Careful thought has been given to the place and nature of collective worship during the transition of this school to a Church of England academy. It has been an important factor in the initial journey of transformation. Diocesan provided values have successfully been used to ensure worship themes are relevant to all and develop respect for the diverse beliefs and affiliations represented in the academy community. An external evaluation of the worship programme provided valuable feedback resulting in changes responding to students' suggestions, although they still have very limited opportunities to contribute to the planning and leading of worship. The programme is driven by the *thought for the week* jointly planned by some staff and the chaplain. Themes are widely regarded as thought-provoking with a focus on spiritual and moral development. Social and charitable action is often a direct outcome. Resources for and presentations in all contexts include Biblical material and an invitation to pray with time for reflection. Students are respectful and understanding of one another's responses. They recognise that the worship programme, though it is not always understood as *worship*, is a major element in defining the academy's Christian ethos. It helps them understand the shape of the Church year and a distinctively Christian perspective on the shared values which in turn influence attitudes, behaviour and relationships throughout the academy. A good understanding of Christian beliefs about God is developed in religious education. However, a commitment to inclusive worship in this diverse community means that the language of *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* is used with caution in a worship context. This sensitivity is appreciated as demonstrated by support from all parts of the community for the Christmas carol service held in St Mary's Church. Beyond the collective worship programme, the *reflection room* is used by a small number of staff on Thursday mornings, with the Chaplain, for a short period of traditional Anglican worship. The room is also used by Muslim students for lunchtime prayers. Whilst the impact of worship within the academy is predominantly positive, inconsistent engagement by some staff in class contexts means that the experience is not uniformly successful for all students.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The religious education department is led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject specialist who was appointed in September 2014. Her energy and commitment ensure that students' progress is rigorously tracked and evaluated. It is not possible to make year on year comparisons of GCSE results due to changes in the courses offered. However, monitoring enables appropriate support, interventions and, for Year 10 students, targeted revision sessions after school and during holiday periods which are well attended by students of all abilities. Students are generally making good progress with some doing outstandingly well. The course enables students to develop a good understanding of Christianity and other religions and how beliefs are applied in daily living. The planning of units of work is being revised to develop a more engaging course which develops thinking skills through an enquiry approach supporting spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The quality of teaching is good. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work reveal that tasks and resources are carefully selected to be engaging and suit the varying abilities of different students. High expectations are made clear through effective marking, which in almost all cases reflects the school's marking policy. The local area is used well in support of RE with visits to St Mary's Church and the mosque. The chaplain has supported some lessons and was instrumental in the organisation of a *peace week* which enabled students, including those in the sixth form, to engage with an inspiring visiting speaker. This experience gave rise to a 'buzz' of interest throughout the academy. The current subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the subject and under her guidance there is obvious capacity for the effectiveness and influence of RE to improve.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

As part of the process of establishing Chiltern Hills as a Church of England academy, representatives of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education set out seven Christian values to define its ethos. They were carefully selected and explained to be acceptable to all members of the diverse community, some of whom were anxious about the transformation of their community school. Since that time they have consistently been used to inform staff appointments, staff and student induction and all policies. They are displayed all around the building and their Christian significance is made clear through the collective worship programme. They are understood by everyone to be Christian values but are also recognised as important by students from other faiths and those with no religious affiliation. All attest to their impact on behaviour, relationships and learning. However, a distinctively Christian perspective on these values has not been explicitly used during the academy's journey of change to define and explain its commitment to high quality, inclusive education for all. Self-evaluation documentation provides little analysis of the impact of the values. However, they underpin the robust monitoring and evaluation which drives a commitment to what's best for each student. This is seen in decisions made about the curriculum and whole school initiatives to improve learning and teaching. It is also clear in the high priority given by leaders to the continuing improvement of RE and collective worship. Values also inform the opportunities available to staff for training specific to their development needs and the overall needs of the academy. Sensitive liaison with the local community, church and mosque throughout the transition to Church of England status has resulted in good, mutually supportive relationships which have an impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the academy.

SIAMS report May 2015, Chiltern Hills Academy, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 2RG